

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

DECISION RECORD AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Oak Restoration Demonstration Project
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-02-01

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (OR090-EA-02-01) to analyze the effects of this Proposed Action and alternatives. The EA and a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for public comment in December, 2001. One public comment letter was received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl" (April 1994) and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan" (June 1995), as amended by the "Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines" (January 2001); (2) the Proposed Action and alternatives are in conformance with the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

DECISION

It is the decision of the BLM to select the Proposed Action (Alternative 3 - Mixed Oak/Conifer Restoration) described in the Oak Restoration Demonstration Project EA. This EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts. Implementation of this decision will result in forest management activities including: cutting trees and shrubs,

girdling trees, burning cut trees, broadcast burning, noxious weed control, and planting and seeding of native species. The selected alternative will be implemented with two minor changes from the description of Alternative 3 in the EA: (1) in some areas of the 35-year-old stand, more than 4-6 trees per acre may be left as coarse woody debris and more than 4-6 trees per acre may be left as snags because of the uneven stand density; (2) a helicopter will be used pile cut trees instead of hand-piling in the portion of the 14-year-old stand that will be broadcast burned. Piles would be placed on the existing spur road and/or landing, as described in the EA. No landing or refueling site would be needed for the helicopter. These minor changes do not alter the analysis of environmental impacts from those described in the EA.

Non-vascular plant surveys have been completed for the project area. A single site of *Pithya vulgaris*, a Survey and Manage fungus in category D, was found in the 35-year-old stand and will be protected.

The selected alternative conforms with the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl" (NSO ROD, April 1994) and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan" (RMP, June 1995), as amended by the "Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines" (January 2001).

ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA analyzed two other alternatives in detail: Alternative 1 – Maintain Current Management Approach (No Action Alternative), and Alternative 2 – Oak Restoration. Alternative 1 would not treat the 35-year-old stand and would implement current pre-commercial thinning practices in the 14-year-old stand. Alternative 2 would attempt to establish oak woodland conditions in the 35-year-old stand and oak savanna conditions in the 14-year-old stand, and would remove cut trees from the 35-year-old stand.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

The purpose of the action is to restore oak and oak-conifer forests that were historically typical of the Willamette Valley foothill ecosystem; to maintain and enhance habitat for wayside aster (*Aster vialis*); and to provide a site to demonstrate to the public the implementation and results of such restoration techniques. All three alternatives would meet the purpose of the action to some extent, but the selected alternative will best meet the purpose of the action.

All three alternatives would maintain the vigor of the existing oak trees in the 14-year-old stand, although Alternative 1 would not maintain oaks in the 35-year-old stand. Overall, the targets of the selected alternative best match the oak-conifer forest that was the likely historical condition of the project area.

All three alternatives would maintain existing habitat for wayside aster, but Alternative 1 would not enhance wayside aster habitat.

The selected alternative is most likely to provide a good demonstration to the public because it maintains the most options for future restoration and has the highest likelihood of successful restoration, given the current conditions of the project area. The targets of Alternative 2 for an oak woodland and oak savanna would require much more change to the site and are less certain of success.

The selected alternative will not prevent or retard attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives: as documented in the EA, the project area does not include Riparian Reserves, and the selected alternative will not have any effect on aquatic or riparian resources.

The selected alternative will not have an adverse effect on energy development, production, supply, or distribution.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

On August 30, 2001, BLM sent a letter requesting comments on the scope of the proposed project. The two responses to that scoping request are described in the EA. A public notice advertising the availability of the EA and FONSI appeared in the Eugene Register-Guard on December 26, 2001. Additionally, the EA and FONSI were mailed to interested individuals and organizations. A 30-day public comment period closed on January 25, 2002. One comment letter was received from the Oregon Natural Resources Council, which was generally supportive of the project, urged close monitoring of the wayside aster populations, and expressed concern about the spread of noxious weeds.

No consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act is required, because the selected alternative will not have any effect on any listed species. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been notified of this proposal and has determined, in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5(b), that the proposed undertaking will have no effect on cultural resources. The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians were notified of this project during the scoping process, requesting information regarding tribal issues or concerns relative to the project, but no response was received.

IMPLEMENTATION

This decision will be implemented by BLM personnel and by the non-federal partners of BLM in the grant from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for "Conservation of Oak and Pine Habitat in the Southern Willamette Valley, Oregon," as described in the EA.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to implement this forest management project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, this decision will not be subject to protest until the notice of decision is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard on April 3, 2002. The published notice of decision will establish the effective date of the decision. 43 CFR 5003.2(a). Protests of this decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of decision.

Signed by: *Steven A. Calish*, Field Manager
South Valley Resource Area

Date: March 28, 2002